economic and people-to-people linkages, Government is of the opinion that an additional Consulate could expand India-US trade and economic relations. It will also lead to faster processing of requests for US visas and consular services and would offer increased opportunities to enter into mutually beneficial cooperation.

Safety of Haj pilgrims

1047. SHRITARIQ ANWAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that a large number of Indians died during the Haj this year;

(b) if so, the exact number thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the new steps proposed by Government for the safety of Haj pilgrims?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) A total of 290 Indians died during Haj 2006 as per following break-up:

(i) Due to natural causes like cardiac arrest, respiratory failure, etc.	—	217
(ii) Due to stampede	—	62
(iii) In building collapse	—	3
(iv) In road accidents	—	7
(v) In lift accident	—	1

(c) the orientation/training of pilgrims is a regular feature of Haj arrangements. Haj Committee of India, in coordination with State Haj Committees and other voluntary organizations who are involved in the Haj arrangements, has been conducting orientation camps throughout the country for prospective Haj pilgrims, with special emphasis on the performance of Haj especially on safety measures and methods to deal with emergencies such as accidents and stampedes, etc. These are explained in detail by specially trained resource persons.

Expansion of 1974 Bilateral Protocol

1048. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to the reply to Unstarred Question 1723 given in the Rajya Sabha